

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on “The Obama Administration’s Climate Change Policies and Activities”
September 18, 2013

(As Prepared for Delivery)

In late June, President Obama released his Climate Action Plan, which broadly outlined a variety of executive actions for federal agencies to implement the administration’s climate policies.

On August 6, I wrote thirteen of these agencies, including the White House science advisor’s office, requesting testimony and specific information about each agency’s climate-related activities and the coordination of that activity across the federal government.

Despite six weeks’ notice, we will not get many answers today. Eleven agencies requested to testify – twice, I might add -- did not provide a witness or submit information about agency activity to the subcommittee. That does not send a positive message for increased public understanding of what this administration is doing on an economically consequential policy matter.

The point of my request was for the subcommittee to examine the scope of federal climate change actions that have been tolling billions of dollars a year in spending and countless man-hours of work since the mid-1990s, reaching over \$22 billion this year alone. The State Department reports that over the period 2010-2012, the U.S. provided over \$7.5 billion in foreign assistance to address climate change.

This is an oversight hearing. Congress needs specific information from the administration to evaluate the federal government’s current and planned regulatory actions. Without this information, the public is left out of the debate, without knowing the extent of agency activity, whether it effectively addresses the established risks, or what it really will accomplish.

Whatever you think about managing future climate or global warming risks, oversight of the administration’s plans to respond to those risks is critical for Congress to make sound economic and policy decisions. Federal agencies must account transparently for the effectiveness and impact of their actions – especially when a number of these actions collide directly with Americans’ efforts to develop our diverse energy resources, which are so vital to economic strength and competitiveness.

Today we will hear from the heads of two federal agencies, who I have a high respect for, Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy – both of whom are aware of my serious concerns with the direction of the administration’s climate change policies, especially those being implemented by the EPA.

The president’s global warming agenda being implemented through the EPA has been holding back the economy which continues to struggle. Since 2009, the agency has been busy imposing costly requirements on coal-fired electricity and other fossil fuels while targeting manufacturers with new regulatory burdens, only increasing to the economic uncertainty. This week, EPA is expected to release their proposal to control greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, one that is almost certain to further the economic uncertainty facing our nation’s utilities and have devastating effects on our communities and most importantly, the consumers who pay their electricity bills every month.

In my view, this is not a sound economic and climate policy. There is a better path forward, one that stops treating affordable domestic energy and a strong economy as part of the problem and embraces them as a vital part of the solution.

In a number of subcommittee hearings we have explored the ingredients for U.S. economic resurgence. This resurgence in good part depends upon access to affordable and reliable electricity, energy diversity,

and embracing the tremendous opportunities presented with our new-found oil and natural gas abundance.

We've begun to see early fruits of what this resurgence could be in the tremendous jobs creation and economic vitality from the shale gas revolution. IHS Global Insight recently reported that this energy revolution has already increased average household income by an average of \$1,200 in 2012, a figure that is projected to grow to \$2,700 in seven years. Households are spending less on electricity and less on goods and services within the broader economy, all because of less expensive energy.

Building on this momentum, we should set policies that ensure energy access and establish prudent future planning, through electric grid reliability, expanded energy infrastructures of pipelines, roads, ports, increased R&D for energy, agriculture, and increased coal, LNG, and nuclear exports that carry U.S. energy access the world over.

Last week, a delegation from Bangladesh visited me to explain their need for U.S. expertise and help particularly in gaining access to coal-fired electricity. With only about 47 percent of their population having access to electricity, Bangladesh is one of the most energy poor nations on the planet, and one particularly susceptible to extreme weather events, but the World Bank, reflecting the administration's climate policy, had recently turned down funding for Bangladeshi coal development.

So today, I hope we can examine how agency priorities meet our positive vision and agenda for economic growth.

I recently read an article that stated that the arctic ice had nearly a million more square miles of ocean covered with ice than at this time last year. But, this hearing is not about the failure of predictions that summer arctic would be ice-free by this year, the 15-year pause in global temperature rise, or the rush to call every horrible weather disaster an omen of climate doom. Clear away the gloom and doom tactics and there are serious issues to address, such as what is needed to build our economy or to bring meaningful energy access to Bangladesh, but you have to be serious about it. I look forward to hearing from our two agencies today on exactly what the administration's climate plan entails for a vision of economic resurgence and energy access to all.

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